

Genesis 12-14 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

The first 11 chapters of Genesis are the Introduction to the Bible.

They set the scene for the main story of the OT which is the history of the Nation of Israel.

That begins with the Father of the Nation – the man who is generally considered to be the first Jew – Abraham.

Dividing the Bible this way we can easily miss the subtle humor the Holy Spirit inserts into the story between chs. 11 & 12.

You'll remember from our study last week the *boast* of the people under Nimrod's leadership as they traveled east from the mountains of Ararat where the ark had landed.

They came to the Plain of Shinar and chose it as the location of their incipient empire.

Though God had told them to go forth and *fill* the earth, they decided to band together.

In 11:4 we read –

And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

Rather than honoring the Name of God and obeying His mandate to fill the earth, they set themselves to *manufacture their own name* – to *establish their own identity* independent of God.

In Ch. 12, God comes to one man and promises to make his name great!

The rebels of ch. 11 determine to make a city – God promises to make him a nation.

The rebels want to elevate themselves with their tower - God promises to exalt this one man over all others.

Genesis 11 is all about the plans of man; ch. 12 is all about God's plans.

CHAPTER 12

¹Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your

country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. ²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Abram is the same as *Abraham*.

He gets a name change later in the story; for now he's just *Abram* – "Father."

V. 1 tells us that God *had already spoken* these words to Abram.

This commentary looks back to ch. 11 and the genealogy of the descendants of *Shem* through *Peleg*.

There we read that *Terah*, Abram's father, packed up and moved from Ur of the Chaldeans to the City of Haran, taking Abram and his grandson Lot with him.

Here we see the details and a fuller explanation of what was going on.

It was Abram who initiated the move, not his father Terah.

God had come to Abram while he was living in the urban center of Ur and told him to leave his homeland, leave his family and father's house and go west to a land God would lead him to.

Abram had begun the preparations to go when his father decided to tag along.

Abram had two brothers – Nahor and Haran.

Something happened to Haran and he *died* there in Ur.

It may be that Terah was afraid of losing Abram as well and so instead of letting him just move away, he decided to tag along.

They got as far as the city of Haran where they stopped and lived for a while until Terah passed on.

Abram will eventually become the model of faith later history holds him as, but he doesn't *begin* there.

His initial steps in response to God's call were halting and imperfect.

He *learned* obedience and that God can be trusted.

God told him to *leave his country* – he did that.

God told him to *leave his family* – he did, but took Lot his nephew

along.

God told him to *leave his father's house* – technically he did that, but he took Dad along.

God told him to *follow His lead to the land of Canaan* – Abram stopped in Haran for how long we don't know.

This is the way it is for most of us as we learn to trust and obey God.

He comes to us in the midst of our worldly lives and calls us to Himself and a life of blessed promise.

We respond by taking the first step of repenting of our sin and putting our faith in Christ.

We begin the journey by forsaking our past life – sort of.

We leave some things, but hang on to others.

We see what God is calling us into but often balk and halt and take little side trips.

We set up camp in some Haran of our own until we realize just how dead we really are to the old way of life.

Then once more we set out toward the place of promise and blessing God holds out to us.

Where are you tonight?

Ur? Still in the world - God's called but you've refused to budge?

On the road to Haran - tagging along a lot of connections to the past?

In Haran – with one foot in the world, not really ready to let go of the past, and one foot on the path to the fullness God promises to those who live without compromise?

Or have you left Haran and are now going for it with God, trusting Him to lead you?

Vs. 2-3 of Genesis 12 are known as the Abrahamic Covenant.

This is God's unilateral & unconditional promise to Abram.

Notice what God says He will do –

1) I will make you a great nation –

This is the promise of many descendants who will comprise a mighty nation.

2) I will bless you and make your name great –

This is the promise of God's abundant favor and that Abram will become the focus of His redemptive attention.

Abram's name will become great because it will be tied to God's.

3) You shall be a blessing –

As Abram is blessed by God, he shall overflow in blessing on others.

4) I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you –

As the focal point of what God is doing on Earth, the posture of others toward Abram will become the crucial factor in determining they *follow* or *oppose* God.

In other words, God's redemptive focus will shift to this one man and his descendants.

Others who want to be in relationship with God will thus show favor to him & them.

It's an interesting way to study history to chart how different groups, empires and even civilizations have treated Israel and the fate they've known.

When a group blesses Israel, they've been blessed; but when they turn on Israel and oppress them, they are cursed.

This is an important factor to consider as we pray for our own nation and leaders and their foreign policy decisions.

5) In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed -

God here narrows the promise of the coming Redeemer, originally made in Genesis 3, to Abram and his descendants.

All families, all people will be blessed because the redemptive focus God *narrows* here just to Abraham and his descendants will one day widen out again to embrace *all* because of One of those descendants = Jesus Christ!

Why did God choose Abram? What commended his particular choosing?

God's call of Abram is a great example of *grace*.

The Bible nowhere says that prior to God's call Abram was righteous or that he sought God.

On the contrary, we read that his background was *idolatry* - Joshua 24:2-3 –

2And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other

gods. ³Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants . . .

Abram's story begins, not with Abram but with God!

God called Him in grace - Abram responded in faith.

This is the way Paul describes *salvation* in **Ephesians 2:8&9** -

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God*, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Notice how often God says "I will" to & for Abram in these verses - 5 times!

In ch. 11, the rebels who built Babel 3 times say, "Let us" do a total of 5 things.

- 1) Let us make bricks
- 2) Let us bake them thoroughly
- 3) Let us build ourselves a city
- 4) Let us build a tower
- 5) Let us make a name for ourselves

They're a bunch of "let-us heads."

God answers the rebellion of mankind by launching a strategy of grace.

The first time he dealt with the united rebellion of mankind with judgment, the Flood.

This time He'll deal with it by grace, one man at a time.

Just as mankind has been subverted by sin – God will now subvert sinful man by injecting grace into one man – and from that one man spreading it to many.

⁴So Abram departed [this is from Haran] **as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.**

Hadn't God told Abram to leave his family? What's Lot doing tagging along?

Here's another example of Abram's growing yet imperfect faith;

He leaves Haran headed for Canaan, but Lot still there.

Lot will prove to be *nothing but trouble* for Abram.

Hey – notice Abram’s age – 75! He’s no spring chicken! He’s a mature man with some serious years under his sash, and yet he’s still launching out in a daring venture of faith that will see his entire life and household put in upheaval.

Brothers and sisters, don’t think that your later years are resigned to a quiet and boring or even selfishly directed pleasure-seeking life of retirement.

God may call you when you’re 60 or 75 to the mission field or in to some full-time ministry!

Saints never retire from serving God.

⁵Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. ⁶Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

Abram’s household had enlarged during his stay in Haran.

As God’s blessing came on him, his flocks and herds grew.

This would mean the need for more shepherds and keepers of the livestock who would hire on.

These would have had their own families who became a part of Abram’s community.

As the holdings of the community grew, there would be the need for a division of labor because there would be too much stuff to keep track of and maintain.

This meant craftsmen who specialized in different areas the burgeoning clan needed help with would join the community, along with their families.

As the clan grew and different members produced unique trade goods, they’d see their wealth grow – which would translate into *even more people* who would want to join the community.

Abram packed up his nomadic clan and they traveled to Canaan.

Their immediate concern would be to find a good pasturage for their extensive flocks and herds.

Shechem was a prime location in the heart of Canaan. [Pic 1]

[Pic 2]

7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

When Abram reached Shechem, God made it clear that *this* was the land He had promised.

How God appeared to Abram here isn't stated.

Whatever the form of His appearance, Abram built his first altar and worshipped.

8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the LORD. **9** So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South [Negev].

Nomads base their travels on the needs of their flocks.

Abram's holdings were so large they could quickly overgraze good pasturage.

This would have put him in huge disfavor with the native

Canaanites, who are mentioned in v. 6 for that very reason.

Good shepherds know they need to move their flocks off pastures that have been grazed or they can be permanently ruined by stupid sheep who don't know any better.

This is why nomads are nomads, why they pick up and move every so often – they have to take their flocks to new regions.

Shechem was a fairly well populated area and Abram knew his flocks had to be moved to new ground so he traveled south to the region of Bethel.

The area between Bethel and the little burg of Ai is more prime pasture, so they stayed there for a while.

Abram builds another altar and again worships.

When the pasturage at Bethel is grazed, Abram continues moving toward the south and heads toward the Negev a vast open region with little population.

The reason why is because it's pretty dry – no rivers or springs.

10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

Famine was always the scourge of the ancient world.

It was almost always the result of drought.

Because the economy of the ancient world was based on agriculture, they depended on the rains to ensure the production of food.

Irrigation and water reservoirs were just beginning to become a part of the technology of the times but even they depended on the rains.

All it took was a short drought, especially for nomadic shepherds, to see a complete reversal of fortune.

Those who lived in cities or villages usually had some food reserves to depend on.

Granaries were pretty common and stocked for just such times.

But the nomads needed fresh grass on a daily basis for their livestock.

When this famine hit, Abram took the practical and pragmatic step of moving toward pasture – Egypt.

The Nile and the irrigation methods used there ensured that even when the rains weren't falling, there was still grass.

[Pic of Bedouin]

11 And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. 12 Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This *is* his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13 Please say you *are* my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.”

Sarai, who will later be renamed “Sarah,” was a fine looking lady and Abram was fearful the Egyptians might *murder him* in order to *take her*.

His clan was big enough to stave off an attack from the smallish Canaanite clans and tribes, but the Egyptians were another matter. They were a mighty kingdom and powerful force and he was now entering their domain.

So he works up this scheme with his wife: They'll play off their relationship as brother and sister instead of husband and wife.

Now, this was partly true – Sarai was the daughter of his father but not his mother. (Gen. 20:12)

But it was a ruse that in fact *violated* the covenant they had as husband and wife.

Abram's *intent* was to deceive and that's what makes it a lie, the intent!

He was trusting in his own clever machinations for protection instead of trusting in the Lord.

See what's happened to him?

His failure to look to the Lord for supply in famine stricken Canaan has now led to his forgetting the Lord in the business with his wife.

His path of faith from Haran to the place of promise has deviated onto a side path of self-reliance.

Abram, like most of us, found it easier to trust God for the far-off promise than for the right-now needs. [\[1\]](#)

14 So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful.

15 The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. **16** He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

Sure enough, when they got to Egypt, some of the sons of Pharaoh, of whom he had dozens!, saw Sarai and were struck with her exquisite beauty.

They carried word back to their father and he sent out the command for her to be added to his harem.

Probably important that we understand the role of the harem in the ancient world.

It was mostly just a sign of a king's power and majesty.

The bigger the harem, the more beautiful the women, and the more richly they were dressed, appointed, and cared for, the *greater* the king.

We tend to think of the harem mostly in a *sexual* way, and indeed there was some of that at different times and in

different kingdoms.

But the primary function of the harem was to be just one more sign of power and wealth.

The prettiest and most attractive women of the kingdom were *automatically* added to the harem.

They *belonged* to the king – and his taking them *showed* his authority and pre-eminence above all others.

It was expected that Sarai would be taken into Pharaoh's house if she wasn't already married.

Because she and Abram have been spreading the news that they're just brother & sister since they first arrived in Egypt, when Pharaoh's servants come to take her, they can't protest or they will come off as crooks and possibly even spies.

Pharaoh, thinking Abram was her brother, enriched him with compensation for the loss of his sister to his harem.

17 But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

The Holy Spirit is careful to identify Sarai as a Abram's wife here!

Man may fool man but never God.

God has a special plan for Sarai, and it's not in the harem of Pharaoh, so God brings significant trouble to his household.

18 And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She *is* my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way." 20 So Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

It was obvious to Pharaoh that the trouble his house was experiencing was supernatural and he investigated.

It was discovered they began with Sarai's addition to the harem.

When he dug a little deeper he discovered the truth – probably by asking Sarai.

Then he called in Abram and rebuked him for the ruse.

Fortunately, Sarai was not one of those he'd called for from the harem to share his bed.

If she had been, Pharaoh knew things could have been much worse.

He restored her to Abram and gave strict instructions that the Egyptians were to leave them alone – they enjoyed the protection of God.

I wonder if Abram winced as Pharaoh rebuked him!

Here's a pagan king rebuking the man of God for his failure to tell the truth and to trust God!

It's always sad when unbelievers rebuke Christians for their failure to act like it!

And yet, God will use even this to grow Abram in his faith and teach him that He is utterly reliable.

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote, "Faith is not a mushroom that grows overnight in damp soil; it's an oak tree that grows for a thousand years under the blast of the wind and rain."

We can easily empathize with Abraham in his choice to run to Egypt.

There was a famine & he needed to feed his household.

There was plenty of food in Egypt, why not go there?

Why bother God with this crisis when a solution was at hand?

What did it matter if the solution didn't really fit within God's directions *thus far*?

After all, God hadn't ever specifically said he **WASN'T** to go to Egypt.

Were Abram failed was in NOT SEEKING THE LORD in the midst of his crisis.

Faith means total dependence on God – not partial dependence or when it's convenient or one's exhausted all other possibilities.

How many of us do that – we strive and fight and wangle and deal and do all we can and only when everything has fallen apart do we turn to the Lord?!

Having set our feet on the path of faith, we must look to the Lord for EVERY step.

God promised to bless Abram. That blessing was unconditional!

So even in the midst of his cooking it in Egypt God blesses him.

And yet, as is always the case, what WE sow, WE reap.

Along with God's continued favor, Abram picked up some excess baggage in Egypt.

Sarai got a servant who will prove to be a problem, not just to

Abram and Sarai, but to their descendants throughout history.

GENESIS 13

Since we covered all of ch. 13 this last Sunday, I'll leave it for you to get a tape/CD if you weren't here.

In ch. 13, Abram returns to Canaan and the region of Bethel where'd he'd been before.

After a while it become clear that Lot's and Abram's households are too big to continue together; they have to split up.

Abram gives Lot the choice of which region he wants and Lot moves into the lush Jordan plain, eventually forsaking the nomadic life in favor of city living.

He takes up residence in the wicked city of Sodom.

CHAPTER 14

¹And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations [goyim – generic terms of gentiles], ²that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). ⁴Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

Our idea of a king is someone who rules over a nation, which is a collection of provinces, each province have several cities and towns.

The typical king of the world in Abram's day was the ruler of one city that was dominant over its region. These were called "city-states."

For years, critics of the Bible used ch. 14 as an example of how inaccurate it was.

They based their criticism on the fact that none of the names of the kings listed in this Mesopotamian confederacy find any correlation in history.

That can no longer be said to be true – every name in this list has

been found connected to these locations at specifically this time!

In fact, there are several words used here that are remarkable for their use and description of the events recounted here because they were precisely the words used *at that time*.

For instance, Tidal is identified as the “king of nations, goyim.”

This was the term used at that time to describe the region of Anatolia which was populated by numerous loose tribal groups, called goyim.

There was a ruler from this region who united them into a formidable fighting force which allied with several other

Mesopotamian city-states at this time. [\[2\]](#)

In these verses we read of 4 Mesopotamian city-states which united in a confederacy of conquest.

Historians and archaeologists have found that for this time in history, this kind of alliance was the standard arrangement when one city-state wanted to expand.

The king would find 3 or 4 neighboring kings who were ready to launch out and they would form a military pact, reaching out to put bordering regions under tribute.

These 4 Mesopotamian kings subjected the 5 city-states of the southern Jordan valley to tribute, taking a healthy cut of the trade wealth that flowed through them.

This lasted for 12 years, then the 5 Jordanian city-states decided they'd had enough and rebelled.

They managed to stave off their oppressors for a year, but then the northern-eastern alliance came once more in force back into the region.

⁵In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which *is* by the wilderness.

⁷Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that *is*, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

Before attacking the Jordanian city-states *directly* the north-east alliance swept through the regions around them, making sure they couldn't gain allies and extra forces from these people

Then they entered into battle with the 5 rebel kings.

Archaeologist Nelson Glueck documents the destruction left in these regions by these 4 kings.

“I found that every village in their path had been plundered and left in ruins, and the countryside was laid waste. The population had been wiped out or led away into captivity. For hundreds of years thereafter, the entire area was like an abandoned cemetery, hideously unkempt, with all its

monuments shattered and strewn in pieces on the ground.”^[3]

8And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim ⁹against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim *was full of asphalt pits*; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; *some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains.* ¹¹Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. ¹²They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

The 5 Jordanian kings were routed, getting caught in the asphalt pits of the lowland near the Dead Sea.

What was left of the fighters of the Jordanian cities fled to the hills, leaving the cities wide open to attack by the 4 kings from the north.

They swept in and sacked the cities, taking goods and slaves.

Lot was among the captives they hauled off.

13Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and

they were allies with Abram.

Ch. 13 ends with Abram moving his tent from Bethel to *this* place in Hebron by the terebinth trees of Mamre.

The writer wants us to see vs. 1-12 of ch. 14 as background.

The real focus in this entire story is on Abram.

He's living peacefully in Hebron, enjoying the goodness of God when one day a messenger comes with an urgent plea – Lot's been taken captive in this battle of the Jordan Plain.

14 Now when Abram heard that his brother [literally-*relative*] was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. **15** He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which *is* north of Damascus. **16** So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

Abram had 318 men of fighting age who had been born in his house!

This gives you an idea of just how big Abram's clan was!

He armed his men and went in pursuit of the Northern forces who were headed home.

He came on them at night in the region of northern Israel.

It says that Abram divided his forces and then attack.

This probably means they engaged in a kind of guerilla warfare, setting ambushes and nipping at the ranks and sides of the main force as it tried to march north.

They carried this on all the way to the region north of Damascus – many miles!

Finally, the Northern troops realized the booty and prisoners were slowing them down and making bigger targets of them, so they dropped them and high tailed it back home.

17 **And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), [we know it as the Kidron Valley on the east side of Jerusalem] after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings**

who were with him.

The King of Sodom, who'd gotten caught in the slime pits managed to extract himself.

He heard of Abram's successful raid and went to meet him as he was returning.

But before they meet, Abram encounters a far more important person . . .

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] a tithe of all.

This man Melchizedek stands out in the story of the Bible because we don't really expect to encounter someone besides Abram who knew God so intimately or is connected to the Lord in such a dramatic fashion.

Just who is Melchizedek? Where did he come from?

Note what it says about him.

- 1) His name means "King of Righteousness"
- 2) He was the king of Salem.
Salem means "peace" and is the ancient name of Jerusalem.
SO Melchizedek is both the king of righteousness and peace.
- 3) He is called the priest of God Most High – El Elyon; the name that is used in the OT when the priests were serving and worshiping God in the temple, which would be built where? In Jerusalem.
- 4) He blessed Abram – and the lesser is always blessed *by* the greater.
- 5) **He brought out bread & wine** to Abram as signs of blessing & fellowship.
- 6) Finally, Abram gave a tithe, a tenth of all the spoils of the battle to Melchizedek.

We can't say with any certainty who Melchizedek actually was, but the writer of Hebrews in ch. 7 says that we are to understand him

as a picture or a type of Jesus Christ.

- 1) He has no beginning and no end.
- 2) He is the king of righteousness and peace who is also a priest, bridging the space between God and man.
- 3) Who comes with bread & wine, the symbols of Communion.

It's crucial to note the measure Abram used when giving to the King of Salem – a tithe, which means tenth part.

There are some today who want to say that tithing is a command of the Mosaic Law that no longer applies today because we are under grace, not law.

Yes, it's true, tithing was commanded under the Law.

God codified the tithe and actually expanded it to include additional tithes.

If memory serve me correctly, I think the annual percentage of giving required under the Mosaic law was about 23 1/3%.

But this is long before the Law – over 400 years before!

The measure Abram used when giving to the Lord was a tenth – 10%.

21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” **22** But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, **23** that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is* yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’—**24** except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”

Abram turns from the king of Salem to face the king of Sodom.

How often it is that immediately after we've enjoyed a time of intimacy and blessing with God we find the devil right there to make a counter offer.

Anyone who's been at a great retreat knows the inevitable trial that awaits them when they get home.

With the promise of God's blessing still ringing in his ears, Abram finds the wicked king of Sodom right there to offer him riches.

Take the booty, let me just have the people! How typical!
If Melchizedek is a type of Christ, who's the king of Sodom a type of? The devil!

And he says – “Hey, you can have all the stuff-just let me have the folk.”

How often does he make that offer to us?

He promises us a comfortable life of pleasure, just so long as we don't threaten his kingdom by telling others about the Lord.

How many men and women have been seduced off the mission field with the promise of earthly treasure?

How many people have shut up their testimony for fear of losing position at work or among their peers?

The devil is ready to make that trade any day – “You can have the goods, just give me the souls!”

Abram says, “No way! I'll take not a shoelace!”

“God is my reward and I'll not find one ounce of my treasure anywhere else.”

“My fortune rises and falls at His bidding.”

“I'll not mix His blessing with yours!”

Abram will not bind his allies who've gone with him on this rescue under the same ethic and standard he's committed to.

But he is at least committed to it himself and will not compromise with the King of Sodom.

Look at how Abram refers to God, to Yahweh, - as *God Most High, El Elyon, Possessor of heaven and earth.*

These are the titles Melchizedek has just used for God.

Abram has a new and fresh revelation of the Lord and it's sparked a vow from him.

In his tithe to Melchizedek he's lifted up his hand in a solemn oath to God – he would let no man say that another man had made him rich.

Abram demanded all the credit go to God and God alone for his

success. [\[4\]](#)

When we define *success* by human measures and then pursue such success through worldly methods, how can we really say *God* has blessed if success comes?

How much better to let God raise you up, so He gets the glory, and so you *know* it was His work!

That's true for you in your life, whether at school or at work or in just the business of living.

It's also true in the life of a church.

There are endless programs pumped out today to manufacture church growth.

There's a new one that getting quite popular now that originated in Southern CA.

Success is defined as a certain percentage of growth over current attendance, with another percentage of people involved in active ministry and so much more money flowing into the church coffers.

Then there's a highly detailed plan of action to work toward and accomplish these goals.

It's all spelled out in a new book and seminar.

Let's compare that to the Church in the Book of Acts which prayed, loved one another in sincerity and simplicity, depended on the power of the Holy Spirit, and preached the gospel.

We read that God added to their number daily!

Is that the "method" of church growth we ought to follow or has man come up with a better plan?

I think we'll stick with God's method.

CONCLUSION

There is one last thing to consider tonight and that is another subtle contrast between Ch. 11 and 12; between the rebels who want to make a name for themselves and God's promise to make Abram's name great.

Did you notice how the list of kings in v. 1 of ch. 14 begins with Amraphel, king of Shinar?

Shinar is another name for Babylon as we saw in chs. 10 & 11.

It was the place of the city and tower the rebels built.

In lists of names in the ancient world, the first name given is the greatest.

So it's a bit confusing to see Amraphel listed first in v. 1, but then Chedolaomer listed as the leader of the northern confederacy in vs. 4, 5, 9, & 17.

What's going on?

The writer is setting the stage for the *real* story of ch. 14 which is Abram's *victory* over this northern alliance which has successfully ravaged several powerful city-states!

By listing Shinar/Babylon first in v. 1 – we're meant to see how God's blessing of Abram has *already exalted* him over man's attempts to exalt himself!

[1] Guzik, David – Online Commentary

[2] Price, Randall, *The Stones Cry Out* pg. 100-2

[3] Ibid

[4] Guzik, David – Online Commentary